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ON TRADE-OFFS BETWEEN VALUES

I begin with three commonplaces, namely:

(a) that values are plural,

(b) that plural values may conflict; and

(c) that choice between conflicting plural values consists in a trade-off between them.

Each of these apparent truisms has, nevertheless, been denied. (a) was denied by Plato, or so at least Aristotle thought when he insisted, against the 'Platonists', that 'of honour, wisdom and pleasure, the accounts are distinct and diverse. The good, therefore, is not some common element answering to one Idea'[1]. Some utilitarians deny it, as indeed do all those 'monists' who insist on the descriptive homogeneity of the objects of value. indeed, its denial used to be a commonplace, but it is so no longer[2]. It now seems increasingly to be accepted as obvious that things, or options, or states of affairs may be valuable in ways that cannot be reduced to a single way. As Max Weber remarked, we have known since Nietzsche that

> something can be beautiful, not only in spite of the aspect in which it is not good, but rather in that very aspect. You will find this expressed in the Fleurs du Mal, as Baudelaire named his volume of poems. It is commonplace to observe that something may be true although it is not beautiful and not holy and not good[3]

Moreover, within the moral sphere, it is, as Bernard Williams argues, 'surely falsifying of moral thought to represent its logic as demanding that in a conflict situation one of the conflicting oughts must be totally rejected'[4]: one may 'act for the best' and yet commit an uncancelled wrong (which one may rationally regret). And finally, values are not only plural, in the sense of irreducibly diverse: they are also internally so. Even simple pleasures consist in diverse component aspects.

(b) arises when alternatives instantiating different values are mutually incompatible: when one excludes the other /or/ more of one means less of the other. Professor Hirschman has labelled this the 'jeopardy thesis', seeing it as a typical component of the 'rhetoric of reaction': examples are 'Democracy imperils Liberty' and 'The Welfare state

imperils Liberty and Democracy or both'. In characterising it, Hirschman recalls the famous chapter heading of Victor Hugo's Notre Dame de Paris: 'Ceci tuera cela', and he attributes its appeal to what he calls a 'stubborn "zero-sum mentality"'[5]. One way of denying (b) in particular cases is to propose that the alternatives in question may not conflict, but rather, in various ways, mutually support one another: to argue, in other words, 'that an already established reform or institution A would be strengthened rather weakened (as in the jeopardy claim), by projected reform or institution B, that B's enactment is required to give robustness and meaning to A, that B is needed as a complement to A'[6]. Or the conflict may be illusory: it may be possible to advance along both fronts[7]. These kinds of argument are typical of left-wing and progressive rebuttals of the jeopardy thesis. But there is another way of calling (b) into question : by suggesting that the values instantiated by incompatible alternatives are not themselves incompatible but rather, in various ways, interdependent. That is the line of thought I shall develop in the first part of what follows.

(c) asserts that when a choice must be made between incompatible alternatives instantiating different values, such a choice is best described by using the metaphor of a 'trade-off': that the market provides an appropriate model for understanding decision-making in such cases[8]. I shall argue that it is not always appropriate and try to say something about when it is and when it is not.

I shall, therefore, take (a) for granted. I shall suggest that (b) does not adequately describe central cases thought to exemplify it. And I shall argue that where values do conflict, (c) can be a poor way to think about how we make sense of some of our choices and a poor guide to how we should make them.

1. INTERDEPENDENCE OF VALUES

When values clash, this may be because they are mutually inconsistent, or it may be because they yield incompatible alternatives for action, given the way the world is. The latter is, for example, what Sir Isaiah Berlin had in mind when he wrote that 'ends may clash irreconcilably':

> Should democracy in a given situation be promoted at the expense of individual freedom, or equality at the expense of artistic achievement, or mercy at the expense of justice, or spontaneity at the expense of efficiency, or happiness, loyalty, innocence at the expense of knowledge and truth? The simple point which I am concerned to make is that when alternative values are irreconcilable, clear-cut solutions cannot in principle be found[9].

But where the latter relation holds, it may turn out that the 'values' said to be in conflict -- the goods that alternative options embody -- are interdependent. Consider the cases of equality versus efficiency and equality versus liberty

Equality versus Efficiency[10]

The idea that these two values are in conflict and must therefore be traded off has long been a commonplace among economists. Arthur Okun, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Johnson, published his book Equality amd Efficiency: The Big Tradeoff in 1975, in which he described it as 'our biggest socio-economic tradeoff', one which 'plagues us in dozens of dimensions of social policy'[11] -- words quoted in recent editions of Samuelson's Economics to support the idea that there is a tension between democracy and market capitalism[12]. 'For decades', according to Alan Blinder, 'economists have emphasised the fundamental trade-off between equity and efficiency'[13] But is it, after all, so clear what is to be traded for what, and, in particular, whether 'efficiency' can be understood as conflicting, and thus tradeable, with equality or equity? (In the following discussion I shall not distinguish between 'equality' and 'equity', since for this purpose the distinction between them does not matter. The question is: can 'efficiency' be traded off against either?).

Efficiency, on its most natural interpretation, is a secondary objective. It is, one might say, an adverbial quality: one pursues this or that goal more or less efficiently, I can, of course, speak of efficiency as such and value it in, say, a person or a certain way of organising production or a bureaucracy, but only because what they are efficient at is understood. So, for this remarkably simple reason, I agree with Le Grand when he writes

that 'efficiency is not an objective in the sense in which equity is an objective, rather it is a secondary objective that only acquires meaning with reference to primary objectives such as equity'[14]. To speak of a conflict or trade-off between equality or equity and efficiency makes little sense if one's primary objectives include equality and equity. More generally, the very idea of 'efficiency' is, as philosophers used to say, 'parasitic': it presupposes an objective or set of objectives. Professor Atkinson has suggested that it could be interpreted as meaning 'making the best use of scarce resources' and thus be treated as a fundamental objective[15]
. But how can we escape the need for an objective or set of objectives that define what the 'best' uses or resources consists in? I think that Le Grand is right in saying that 'efficiency can be defined only in relation to the ability of forms of social and economic organisation to attain their primary objectives and that therefore efficiency cannot itself be one of those primary objectives'[16]

Often, however, 'efficiency' is really a code for one of those objectives -- usually aggregate economic growth. I suspect that this is most often what is meant when the trade-off in question is referred to, as in the case of Okun's book. But why not then speak directly about a trade-off between growth and equality or equity? I suspect that there may be some rhetorical advantage in using the language of efficiency instead. Perhaps it is that doing so suggests both that economic growth is in itself most efficient in securing a range of implicit social values, such as individual want satisfaction, social stability, technical progress, democracy and, perhaps, equity, and that welfare programmes and redistributive policies are relatively inefficient, and even counter-productive, at doing so.

There are other possible interpretations of 'efficiency'. One is Pareto-optimality. In that case, the suggestion is that the conflict, and thus trade-off, occurs between equal or equitable outcomes and Pareto-optimal ones. But Pareto-optimatlity is a welfarist idea, embodying a social welfare function, ruling out non-welfarist objectives, such as those based on freedom or rights, or invoking merit or desert. Indeed, as Le Grand has suggested,

investigations of the trade-off between various interpretations of equity Pareto-optimality are not really concerned with the trade-of between equity and efficiency at all. Instead, they are investigating what is, at least in part, actually a trade-off between two different kinds of equity: that whose properties are being explored and that embodied in the Pareto social welfare function.[17].

From which I conclude that this famous, supposed trade-off between equality or equity and efficiency is never quite what it seems to be. It is either incoherent or else it is a coded way of referring to other trade-offs between equality or equity and other values, which may well include other conceptions of equity.

Equality versus Liberty[18]

It is often said that equality and liberty must conflict, and that more of one must mean less of the other. Libertarians typically claim that more equality means less liberty, but this thought is widespread, as is its appaent corollary that they must be traded off or weighed against one another. Thus Sir Isaiah Berlin observed that 'the extent of a man's, or a people's liberty to choose to live as they desire must be weighed against the claims of many other values, of which equality, or justice, or security, or public order are perhaps the most obvious examples'[19]

But the question is: are equality and liberty related in this way? The idea that they are relies on the following picture: that these are discrete, free-standing and independently characterisable values the extent of whose realisation can in any case be measured according to some scale that enables the agent engaged in evaluation to express a preference between such 'extents' or else indifference between them. How plausible is this picture?

The answer depends on how one answers Amartya Sen's famous question : 'Equality of What?'[20]. The simplest, and most naive answer, is welfare or utility, whether conceived as happiness or the satisfaction of desire, but this answer fails, as Rawls and other have shown, above all in the face of the objection that it would unjustly

compensate those with expensive tastes for which they could be held responsible. All the other, more plausible accounts of what is fundamental to equality -- of what those who seek more equality seek to equalise -- include various liberties as an essential, constitutive part of the equalisandum. Surveying recent discussions, this is true of Rawls's primary goods[21], Dworkin's resources[22], Sen's basic capabilities[23], Arneson's opportunity for welfare[24] and Cohen's access to advantage[25]. In short, all plausible answers to Sen's question include as central components those aspects of the circumstances of persons that maintain or expand their range of significant choices, and almost all focus explicitly on the notion of opportunity. Indeed, Sen himself describes his favoured notion of a person's 'capabilities' -- 'the various alternative functioning bundles he or she can achieve through choice' -- as 'the natural candidate for reflecting the idea of freedom to do'. His central concern is with those human interests he calls 'advantage', as opposed to 'well-being'. 'Advantage', he writes, is a notion which deals with 'a person's real opportunities compared with others' and is a '"freedom" type notion'[26]. All these accounts -- and. I submit, all plausible accounts -- of what is to be equalised see freedom, meaning the availability of significant options of choice, as integral to equality. In short, egalitarians largely seek to equalise liberties.

So what is at issue here is, in large part, a change from one distribution of (some set of) liberties to another. There are plainly liberties, such as freedom of speech, that can be seen as public goods, used by all in such a way that use by one does not detract from use by another, and others, such as freedom of association, that require use by others to be effective. But suppose that the postulated relation holds. There are then six possibilities. As (some set of) liberties for all becomes more equal, there will be a reduction in (1) the same liberties of some, (2) other liberties of some, (3) the overall liberty of some, (4) the same liberties of all, (5) other liberties of all, and (6) the overall liberty of all. Possibility (1) describes the case of effective property rights or use rights, where previous owners or users lose their exclusive rights. (6) describes the extreme Hayekian thesis of 'the road to serfdom'. But the important point is that in all these cases -- except for the extreme case of (6) -- the verdict on the prospects for liberty after equalisation remains open. This is so, even if, as here assumed, equalisation reduces the liberties asserted in (1) - (5), since these at most show the existence of a trade-off

between the liberties indicated. The verdict on liberty awaits an assessment of all those liberties which survive or are unaffected by the postulated trade-offs. And of course egalitarians urge that the equalisation of conditions, including liberties, often enhances the scope of, and gives reality to, other liberties that would otherwise be worth little.

I conclude that the alleged conflict, and trade-off, between equality and liberty also turns out to be other than it seems -- a conflict between alternatives that this formula fails to capture. The choice in question is rather between particular distributions of various goods, including various liberties. Equalising policies will equalise some of these, at the cost, or to the benefit, of others.

2. CHOICE AS TRADE-OFF

When faced with a choice between alternatives, trade-offs occur when one is exchanged for another because they are taken to be equal in value. But what if the alternatives in question instantiate plural and conflicting values? Le Grand has usefully distinguished between two kinds of trade-off that are relevant here: a production trade-off and a value trade-off. In the former, what is at issue is 'production-substitutability', that is, 'the ability of a welfare programme or of other aspects of the economic and social system to deliver different combinations of objectives'.[27] This idea is an extension of the idea of productive capacity to produce goods and services: what combinations of, say, equity and economic growth can a certain type of economy (given the distribution and structure of actors' objectives) produce? In a value trade-off, there is 'value-substitutability', the idea of which has been expounded by Brian Barry as follows:

> The fundamental idea ... is that although two principles need not be reducible to a single one, they may normally be expected to be to some extent substitutable for one another. The problem of someone making an evaluation can thus be regarded as the problem of deciding what mixture of principles more or less implemented out of all the mixtures which are available would be, in his own opinion, best.[28]

On this, Le Grand comments that 'the idea that in making social evaluations people might be indifferent between various combinations of objectives or principles, just as

in making their consumption decisions they might be indifferent between various combinations of goods, seems eminently sensible[29]. But does it?

Sen has suggested that where there are several objects of value, one alternative course of action may be more valued in one respect and less so in another. There are then three different ways of dealing with the problem. One is in terms of trade-offs: 'to examine the appropriate "trade-offs" and to decide whether on balance one alternative combination of objects is superior to another'[30]. This is to establish a 'balanced complete ordering' specifying which combinations of objects are superior to others. Such an approach, Sen argues, is appropriate for institutional public policy, which requires unambiguous instructions (and, one might add, public justification). Hence the need for consistent and complete social welfare functions or complete social choice functions, specifying non-empty choice sets for all non-empty sets of alternatives to choose from[31].

The other two ways involve 'incompleteness' and 'overcompleteness' respectively. The former 'permits incompleteness in the partial order emerging from plural evaluation'[32]. The latter drops the requirement of consistency and, 'faced with an irreducible conflict of compelling principles ... may admit both the superiority of one alternative over the other and the converse'[33]. Sen maintains that 'the recognition of the diversity of goods with unclear "trade-offs"' is peculiarly relevant to personal judgments and decisions[34]. I fully agree with his suggestion that the first model of 'balanced complete ordering' may be 'unrealistic and deeply deceptive for description and prediction of behaviour, in addition to being possibly unreasonable in substantive ethics'[35]. I also endorse his suggestion that the context of decision-making makes a difference here, though, as I shall argue later, I think that his distinction between 'institutional public policy' and 'personal judgments and decisions' is too crude for the purpose at hand.

Other writers have resisted the first answer by appealing to the notion of 'incommensurabiity' of values. Thus Charles Taylor writes of values that are 'incommensurably higher': 'integrity, charity, liberation, and the like stand out as worthy

of pursuit in a special way. incommensurable with other goods we might have, such as the pursuit of wealth, or comfort, or the approval of those who surround us'. Such values establish what Taylor calls 'qualitative contrasts'[36]. They are values of a special kind with a protected status. They are sacred in a given culture, evoking special emotions, such as admiration and sometimes reverence; they are values with which certain other values cannot be compared without evoking contempt or even horror or outrage.

Joseph Raz invokes the incommensurability of values in a different way. He writes of 'constitutive incommensurabilities', which obtain when agents normally refuse to forego one option for another, where the options have 'a special significance for people's ability to engage in certain pursuits or relationships' and the refusal to trade one for the other is 'a condition of the agent's ability successfully to pursue one of his goals' and where it is typical for people 'to regard the very thought that they may be comparable in value as abhorrent'. Such incommensurabilities

> play their part in conventions of fidelity to relationships and pursuits. Being engaged in a relationship or a pursuit includes belief that certain options are not comparable in value.[37]

Thus 'certain judgments about the non-comparability of certain options and certain attitudes to the exchangeability of options are constitutive of relations with friends, spouses, parents, etc.'. So, for instance, 'only those who hold the view that friendship is neither better nor worse than money, but is simply not comparable to money or other commodities are capable of having friends'. Rankings that treat all options as commensurate 'do not represent people's actual evaluations'. Projects and relationships that constitute human well-being 'depend on a combination of incommensurability with a total refusal even to consider exchanging one incommensurate option for another'[38].

Finally, Pildes and Anderson write of 'hierarchical incommensurability' which occurs where

> the incomparably higher regard for one value over the other is expressed by refusing certain types of trade-offs between the two. Social choice theory cannot represent the relations of hierarchically incommensurable values because an individual's attitudes towards them cannot be captured in terms of a single

consequentialist preference ranking. Any description of options in terms of their consequences alone, apart from their expressive significance, will exclude some of the concerns individuals have that influence their choices.[39].

Thus 'subtle legal and social processes' express 'the higher worth of some values by protecting them against certain kinds of trade-off against lower values. When higher values are at stake, particular kinds of comparisons with lower values are considered inappropriate, immoral or unjust -- comparisons that would express a degradation or depreciation of the higher values[40].

This last approach's focus on the different contexts of choice seems to me promising. To see where it may lead, let us a examine a value with a strong prima facie claim to protected status within our culture,

The Value of Life

What is it worth to save a human life? Is doing so tradeable off against the expenditure incurred in doing so, or against the value of other uses to which that expenditure might be put? One view relies on Kant's distinction between price and dignity. According to Kant, in the Kingdom of Ends,

> everything has either a price or a dignity. If it has a price, something can be put in its place as an equivalent; if it is exalted above all price and so admits of no equivalent, then it has a dignity.[41]

On this view, the value of human life is 'incommensurably higher' than that of its putative equivalents: to suppose that they could be traded off is, in Kant's very words, 'a profanation of its sanctity'[42].

Another view is that we do it all the time. Thus James Griffin writes

> An individual human life has no equivalent. But that is not to say that nothing can be ranked with, let alone outrank, a human life. The French government knows that each year several drivers lose their lives because of the beautiful roadside avenues of trees, yet they do not cut them down. Even aesthetic pleasure is

(rightly) allowed to outrank a certain number of human lives. It is easy here to move imperceptibly from Kant to cant.[43]

Each of these views seems right, though neither seems quite right. Yet they contradict one another. How can this be?

The first (call it 'Kantian') view identifies a principle central to our legal and moral culture that accords a special kind of respect to persons and their inviolability, and a means from within that culture to condemn its frequent violation. Durkheim spoke of this as the religion of individualism, in which the individual as such becomes the focus of sacredness[44]. We think of the right to life as the most basic of rights. We honour those who save lives at great risk to their own; we condemn those who coolly or ruthlessly calculate to gain by the deaths of others; and we devote vast sums to the saving or the prolonging of lives that contribute little or nothing to the general utility and of those that derive little or none from continuing. It seems that refusing to contemplate a trade-off between the worth of a life and other values (especially monetary or material advantage) is constitutive of taking the value of life seriously. Only someone, we are inclined to think, who has the disposition to treat such trade-offs as unthinkable can claim to treat human life, or by extension human dignity, with appropriate respect. (I leave aside the question of abortion here, because, it seems to me, both sides are likely, in this sense, to be Kantians, differing rather over when a human life or personhood begins. I have not heard anyone defending abortion as justified killing).

And yet we certainly do not treat the right to life or the value of saving it as always and everywhere overriding -- as 'trumping' or as lexically prior or as insurmountable moral 'side-constraints'. It is easy to think of examples that fall far short of what Robert Nozick has called 'catastrophic moral horror'[45] in which choices are made that sacrifice, say, a margin of safety for other benefits, or that distribute risks among different categories of people, or allocate scarce medical resources that benefit some at the cost, sometimes fatal, of others. This is the stuff of decision-making in the use and disposal of dangerous materials, in industrial safety, flood control, transport policy and medical administration and practice. The second (call it 'anti-Kantian') view rightly

insists on this last point. We do engage in such trade-offs, or rather we expect our public institutions to do so.

When we do so, we do not normally see the decisions they make as violating Kantian respect, for various reasons. In the first place, they typically concern not the lives of identifiable individuals but rather statistical lives. Second, they are made professionally and impersonally. Third, they are not made from a moral point of view. Often they are made from an economic point of view, from which a life-saving decision foreseen to result in a certain number of deaths can be viewed as a 'practical judgment -- a consumer choice -- by the members of society about what it is worth to reduce the risk of death'[46]. As Schelling has argued in a famous essay, the value of life is, from that point of view, its worth 'to the people who may die, or who may lose somebody who matters to them'[47]. It may, he suggests, be possible to approximate to an answer to the difficult question of what that is by using evidence as to what people will pay to avoid their own deaths or the deaths of those who matter to them, by direct inquiry techniques, or else by some vicarious professional or paternalistic judgment. The first two techniques, he suggests, may lead us to an answer based on the scaling of risks that relies on 'consumers'' actual choices, where the risks can be percieved directly:

> The gravity of decisions about lifesving can be dispelled by letting the consumer (taxpayer, lobbyist, questionnaire respondent) express himself on the comparatively unexciting subject of small increments in small risks, acting as though he has preferences even if in fact he does not. People do it for life insurance; they could do it for lifesaving. The fact that they may not do it well, or may not quite know what they are doing as they make the decision, may not bother them and need not disenfranchise them in the exercise of consumer-taxpayer sovereignty[48].

Schelling's answer, in short, is that the economic point of view is sometimes the right one from which 'to enlighten the issues involved in public programs to save lives'[49], for the avoidance of death is not 'a wholly different kind of objective from others to promote the general welfare'[50].

So perhaps it is true, as Sen suggests, that the trade-off is an appropriate metaphor for analysing and guiding institutional public policy. Does it also properly describe and

guide private institutional decisions -- decisions in the marketplace concerning, for instance, the marketing of dangerous products? The answer seems to be: sometimes yes, and sometimes no. We allow tobacco companies to sell cigarettes and the marketing of cars without passive restraint systems (permitting safety belts not to be worn). Yet sometimes cost-benefit calculations are inadmissible, as in the case of the Ford Pinto car.

In the late 1970s Ford discovered that the location of the Pinto's petrol tank subjected passengers and drivers to substantially greater than average risks of burn injuries and death in low-speed rear-end collisions. Ford investigated the possibility of investing to rectify the problem and made a cost-benefit analysis, a la Schelling, in which a human life was assigned a value of $200,000. Calculating the total cost of repairs for all vehicles at $11 per vehicle, Ford concluded the repair costs would be substantially greater than the benefits of avoiding deaths and burn injuries, and decided against making any repairs. The revelation of this story provoked public outrage and court cases in which substantial damages were awarded against Ford (including large punitive damages) and the Pinto was eventually withdrawn.

What this case shows is that, under certain conditions, trade-offs are inadmissible because of what they are taken to mean. As Pinto and Anderson have put it, in respect of the Pinto story,

> The complaint was that, given the background of social and legal understandings against which Ford executives had acted, Ford's particular trade-off expressed contempt for human life. Other trade-offs of safety against cost need not do so. The Pinto trade-off was especially offensive because the Pinto's problem resulted from a design defect, known to Ford but not disclosed to customers, which Ford's executives took no action to correct. To market deliberately or refuse to recall a dangerously defective good expresses contempt for human life; that contempt is, of course, heightened when the defect is concealed from customers.[51]

Marketing cars without mandatory seat belts might involve an identical or even less favourable trade-off of safety against economy, but, Pildes and Anderson argue, conventions mark out the Pinto decision as inadmissible because of 'culturally contingent reasons' such as 'expressive concerns about autonomy and personal

responsibility'. What principles govern admissibility here? One seems to be that the chain leading from the decision in question to eventual death should run through informed choices of all the actors concerned, or, perhaps, choices that could be so informed.

If conventions mark out admissible from inadmissible private institutional trade-offs, the same must be true for public institutional policy-making. It is by no means always clear, or agreed, what these are or what principles underlie them. Thus the legal regulations governing the U. S. OSHA (Occupational Health and Safety Administration) agency are mutually contradictory, and much doubt and controversy surrounds their operation[52]. Further analysis of the principles governing the admissibility of trade-offs in both public and private policy-making is, it seems to me, much needed.

If we are sometimes Kantians and sometimes not in our (public and private) institutional lives, what of our 'personal' judgments and decisions? Here too the picture is more complex than it may seem. For one thing, these may also be private or public. Consider the following two stories, each of which has two stages.

Suppose a close relative of a sick person who stands to benefit materially from the latter's death is faced with the questions of whether and how much to care for that person. To treat such questions as a trade-off is anathema. Whether to care, how much to care, or how much to pay for care are not, we think, matters for cost-benefit calculation in such a context. Yet suppose the illness worsens and the costs of care increase. Would we expect a family, one of whose members is, it appears, incurably sick to go on pouring its resources away in search of a miracle cure, at the expense, say, of the children's education?[53]

Or consider an example suggested by Schelling[54]. A member of a small fishing community is lost at sea. It may have been agreed in advance to be uneconomical and probably fruitless to search for more than one day in such cases, yet it will not be easy to curtail the rescue. Indeed, 'one more day and another and another may be irresistible, though we damn ourselves for wasting our resources, not at all reconciled by the thought

that, when it is our turn to be lost at sea, others will waste their time in a fruitless search for us'.[55] And yet, if the search beyond a certain distance requires aircraft, we may agree not to acquire the aircraft which, let us suppose, would impose a crippling burden on the community's resources.

On a Griffin-like anti-Kantian account, trade-offs are occurring at all stages in these two stories, for the absolute priority given to care (in the first) and to rescue (in the second) already presupposes a cost-benefit analysis of the limits within which it can operate. On a Kantian account, however, neither stage of the two stories is a trade-off. In the first stage, the question is simply rejected, Razwise, as inadmissible. In the second, a cost is eventually contemplated which appears insupportable because incompatible with the very basis of the family or community. The refusal to pay such a cost need not mean that a corresponding value is set on the benefit foregone. It may do so, but to suppose that it must is to assume that valuation is identical with revealed preference.

My suggestion is that the actors in these stories may be either Kantians or anti-Kantians, and that it is dogmatic to assume that they must be one or the other. If they are Kantians, they will refuse, and indeed attach importance to refusing, the trade-off in question. To fail to see this is to misunderstand what they do. At stage two of each story, we need a religious, not an economic metaphor: the choice they make is a sacrifice, not a trade-off. They do not take the alternatives between which they choose to be equivalent, i.e., equal in value. Least of all are they indifferent between them.

Trade-offs, I conclude, are widespread: they characterise much of our choice-making in both our institutional and our personal lives. But there are areas of both in which choice-making does not take this form, or does so at the cost of violating conventions that we hold to be important. There is no good reason for assuming that all our choices are to be understood as trade-offs. To assume this is to subscribe to a dogma which deflects us from paying attention to the ethical and explanatory significance, in personal and institutional life, of choices that are not trade-offs.

1. Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics, 1, 6, 1096b23ff translated and introduced by Sir David Ross, London, Oxford University Press, World Classics, 1954, pp. 9-10. I do not mean to take sides here on the controversial issue of whether Aristotle was an ethical 'pluralist'.

2. See, for example, the various writings of Sir Isaiah Berlin, T. Nagel, 'The Fragmentation of Value' in his Mortal Questions, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, B. Williams, Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy, London, Fontana/Collins, 1985, C. Taylor, 'The Diversity of Goods' in A. Sen and B. Williams (eds)., Utilitarianism and Beyond, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, A, MacIntyre, After Virtue, London, Duckworth, 1981, M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990, J. Raz, The Morality of Freedom, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986.

3. M. Weber, 'Science as a Vocation' in H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (tr. and ed.), From Max Weber, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1948, pp. 147-48.

4. B. Williams, 'Ethical Consistency' in his Problems of the Self, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1973, p. 183.

5. A. O. Hirschman, The Rhetoric of Reaction, Cambridge Mass., The Bellknap Press of Harvard Univwersity Press, 1991, pp. 85, 121, 122.

6. Ibid., p. 124.

7. See A. S. Blinder, Hard Heads, Soft Hearts, Reading, Mass., Addison-Wesley, 1987:
> For decades, economists have emphasised the fundamental trade-off between equity and efficiency....for the most part, I ignore such painful trade-offs in this book....our present policies are so far from right that the need to trade equity for efficiency disappears. Most of the policies advocated in this book enhance both efficiency and equity. (p. 31).

But see below on this particular alleged trade-off.

8. See C. B. Macpherson, 'Liberalism as Trade-Ofss' in his The Rise and Fall of Economic Justice and Other Essays, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985. Macpherson's argument is different from that advanced here.

9. I. Berlin, Four Essays on Liberty, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. xlix-l.

10. The argument of this section is much indebted to Julian Le Grand, 'Equity versus Efficiency: The Elusive Trade-off', Ethics, 100, pp. 554-68.

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